

In the United States Court of Federal Claims

OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

No. 20-0405V

(not to be published)

NEVA BERNIER,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

Chief Special Master Corcoran

Filed: August 16, 2022

Special Processing Unit (SPU);
Attorney's Fees and Costs

Leah VaSahnja Durant, Law Offices of Leah V. Durant, PLLC, Washington, DC, for Petitioner.

Lara A. Englund, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.

DECISION ON ATTORNEY'S FEES AND COSTS¹

On April 8, 2020, Neva Bernier filed a petition for compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. §300aa-10, *et seq.*² (the "Vaccine Act"). Petitioner alleged that the experienced bilateral shoulder injury related to vaccine administration resulting from Tdap, pneumococcal, and meningococcal B vaccinations received on March 26, 2019. (Petition at 1). On December 23, 2021, a decision was

¹ Because this unpublished Decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, I am required to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims' website in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the Decision will be available to anyone with access to the internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), Petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, I agree that the identified material fits within this definition, I will redact such material from public access.

² National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755. Hereinafter, for ease of citation, all section references to the Vaccine Act will be to the pertinent subparagraph of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa (2012).

issued awarding compensation to Petitioner based on the Respondent's proffer. (ECF No. 29).

Petitioner has now filed a motion for attorney's fees and costs, dated June 26, 2022 (ECF No. 35), requesting a total award of \$28,207.15 (representing \$26,277.60 in fees and \$1,929.55 in costs). In accordance with General Order No. 9, Petitioner filed a signed statement indicating that she incurred out-of-pocket expenses in the amount of \$4.25. (*Id.* at 2). Respondent reacted to the motion on June 28, 2022, indicating that he is satisfied that the statutory requirements for an award of attorney's fees and costs are met in this case, but deferring resolution of the amount to be awarded at the Court's discretion. (ECF No. 36). Petitioner filed a reply on June 29, 2022, requesting that the Court award Petitioner all fees and costs requested in Petitioner's Application. (ECF No. 37).

I have reviewed the billing records submitted with Petitioner's request. In my experience, the request appears reasonable, and I find no cause to reduce the requested hours or rates.

The Vaccine Act permits an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs. Section 15(e). **Accordingly, Petitioner is awarded the total amount of \$28,211.40³ as follows:**

- **A lump sum of \$28,207.15, representing reimbursement for fees and costs, in the form of a check payable jointly to Petitioner and Petitioner's counsel and;**
- **A lump sum of \$4.25, representing reimbursement for Petitioner's costs, in the form of a check payable to Petitioner.**

In the absence of a timely-filed motion for review (see Appendix B to the Rules of the Court), the Clerk shall enter judgment in accordance with this decision.⁴

³ This amount is intended to cover all legal expenses incurred in this matter. This award encompasses all charges by the attorney against a client, "advanced costs" as well as fees for legal services rendered. Furthermore, § 15(e)(3) prevents an attorney from charging or collecting fees (including costs) that would be in addition to the amount awarded herein. See *generally Beck v. Sec'y of Health & Human Servs.*, 924 F.2d 1029 (Fed. Cir.1991).

⁴ Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), the parties may expedite entry of judgment by filing a joint notice renouncing their right to seek review.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Brian H. Corcoran

Brian H. Corcoran
Chief Special Master